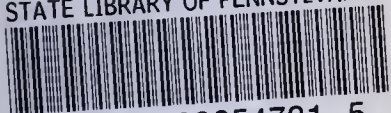


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VOLUME



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1804

STRICTURES

ON THE

NECESSITY

OF

INVIOLABLY MAINTAINING

THE

NAVIGATION AND COLONIAL SYSTEM

OF

GREAT BRITAIN.

BY LORD SHEFFIELD.

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1804.



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STRICTURES,

&c.

THE Navigation Laws of Great Britain afford topics of discussion equally important to the statesman and the merchant. Other subjects, the fashion of the day, may claim the speculation of the hour ; but laws which embrace principles of wide extent and national concern, and which experience has learned to regard as the support and stay of the naval strength of this nation, and as essentially interwoven with its commercial superiority, merit attention and discussions of a very different nature. Foreign countries, conceiving themselves to be injured in proportion as we prosper, have often borne

B

unwilling

unwilling testimony to the wisdom with which they were formed, and the good consequences which they produce ; for they have often struggled by the artifice of negotiation, or by the insolence of menace, to induce us to relax or to renounce them. Citizen Hauterive, after having shewn that they are “ the original cause of the fatal preponderancy of the English marine,” exercised all his powers of sophistry and misrepresentation, to render them objects of general jealousy and hostility*. America has endeavoured, by every species of management, to procure the suspension or renunciation of a most essential part of them. And the North of Europe has supplied opponents also who have tried their strength and diplomatic skill in the same field. But the very reason which has induced all these to oppose and condemn, should induce us to guard and protect the system. The object of attack on one side, should obviously become that of defence on the other ; and every
syllable

* L’Etat de la France, a la fin de l’An. 8.

syllable of reprobation on this point, which is heard from abroad, should be regarded by us at home as virtual applause.

I have frequently considered, with much at- Motives of the Work. tention, the Navigation Laws of which I have spoken ; and the sentiments which I have entertained of them, and which have been long before the public, have not, as I think, been yet refuted. But new occurrences having led to new inquiries, these have confirmed and increased my former convictions. I see, more and more, both with respect to the commerce and independence of the nation, the essential importance of the whole code ; and as the persuasions which I am thus taught to entertain, concern a question of such serious consequence, and a question, too, which, from the circumstances of the times, may become again, and speedily, a subject of negotiation, I shall freely submit them to the judgment and consideration of the country.

At a period, it is true, such as the present, when we hear from the opposite shores nothing

but the menaces of inveterate and exterminating hostility, and are called on to struggle with the power and ambition of France, for our very existence as a people, it may be thought that I should rather endeavour to urge and animate the military spirit of the nation, than to direct its attention to the laws and regulations of navigation and trade.

Apprehension of
new suspen-
sions and sa-
crifices of the
Navigation
Laws.

But, perhaps, it is at this very period, when the country is so completely and properly occupied in preparations for defence, that it is most necessary to direct the consideration of men to the subject I am to discuss, so far, at least, as to prevent any hasty decision, of which the mischief would be irretrievable, on such an important point. I foresee, as I conceive, some occurrences which may incline a false and hasty policy to suspend the principle of those Navigation Laws, on which, indisputably, our trade and our navy depend. The public difficulties may encourage injurious claims and requisitions: the same cause may induce men, in a temporizing moment, and for the sake of conciliation,

liation, to accede to demands which require the most patient and careful examination : and as, in the midst of as full occupation as that of any other volunteer*, I have found leisure to state this national question in writing, I hope others may find leisure to read what I have stated.

Several Acts, directly militating against the Navigation Laws, have been passed within a few years ; and it may be necessary briefly to enumerate some of them, before I proceed to argue on the impolicy by which they were dictated, or with which they may be renewed.

Exposition of
late suspend-
ing Acts, &c.

The law commonly known by the name of 35 Geo. III. the Dutch Property Act, and which very much extended the privileges of neutral bottoms, was passed in the 35th of George the Third, for the avowed purpose of securing the property of the Dutch Emigrants.

In the next year, the 36th of George the 36th c. 17 Do.
B 3
Third,

* Commanding a legion of 1260 Volunteers.

Third, c. 17, an Act was passed, giving power to the Privy Council to permit all vessels, under the same pretence, to bring from any country goods of any sort, which, according to the Navigation Laws, could be imported only by ships, duly navigated, of the countries from whence the goods were brought, or by British ships duly navigated.

According to this law, all merchandize imported in foreign ships was to pay no duty, until taken out of the warehouse for consumption, though the like merchandize, if brought in British vessels, was charged with duty immediately on importation. Here, then, was a manifest injury to the British merchant. Yet if British ships had been permitted to enter their goods under the same power, there would have been still greater mischief in the regulation: for, in such case, we should have had no British ships duly navigated; or, at least, those which were not duly navigated, and foreign vessels, would have still enjoyed superior advantages, because they could

could have more easily completed their crews, and at lower wages.

These Acts of the 35th and 36th were further ^{39th, 40th and 42d. Geo. III.} continued by the Acts of the 39th and the 40th, until the 1st of January 1804; and, finally, an Act passed in the 42d of the King, to terminate also in the year 1804, for repealing these several Acts, or such of them as had not been previously repealed, and for enabling the Privy Council to permit goods to be imported in ships of any country, of not less than 100 tons, or in British ships navigated according to law, from any part of America or the West Indies, not under the dominion of his Majesty.

For these laws there was not even a pretence ^{Pretended motive.} but such as referred to temporary circumstances. During the late war, when, in consequence of the disturbed state of the greater part of the two hemispheres, a very considerable portion of the produce of the world was likely to be brought into this country for safety or for a market, and many of our trading vessels were unavoidably

taken into the service of Government, it was thought advisable, for the present, to suffer all goods to be imported in neutral ships. A great importation consequently took place of the product of the countries at war, as well as of neutral nations, and the goods were permitted to be warehoused, both for *home consumption* and re-exportation.

Real impo-
sity and mischief
of these Acts.

But, though the laws to which I alluded may have arisen, in the whole or in part, from such principles or such pretences, they are not, therefore, to be vindicated. Some of them afforded great advantages to foreign ships, in permitting articles of merchandize to be stored, which they did not allow to British vessels ; and all of them, in principle, obviously amounted to a complete suspension of an essential part of our navigation system, and were admitted, I should think, through laxity of principles, and want of perception of the true spirit of our Navigation Laws. They were favoured, indeed, by the idea, that merchandize could not be brought into this country without leaving something behind

behind on re-exportation ; and they were not perhaps so highly objectionable at the period when our shipping and seamen were so fully employed during the war. But here ends the apology which is to be offered for them ; and why any of them should have been allowed to continue in force after the peace, and till 1804, I think it will not be easy to assign a reason.

These Acts, at the same time that they may have augmented the quantity of merchandize brought to this country, greatly increased also the quantity of foreign tonnage employed in our carrying trade ; and all the advantages thus held out to foreign shipping, were peculiarly calculated to establish that trade in the hands of the Americans, on the conclusion of the war, when such a number of transports, and so many ships, seamen and artificers, were to be discharged from the public service as would be fully equal to the carrying on of the whole of our commerce. Under such circumstances, therefore, what was to be the probable result ? Those ships were to be laid up by discouragement in
our

our ports to rot, and those seamen, together with the numerous classes of persons occupied in ship-building, were to be dispersed abroad in search of employment, and many to be seduced into the services of other nations, or to pass over to America, and, consequently, they and their progeny to be lost to their native country for ever.

The mischief, indeed, which was foreseen, arising from these measures, was soon felt. The most respectable meetings of merchants were held from time to time, and very proper representations have been laid before the minister and the public, in which it is strongly stated, that many ship owners, no longer being able to freight their vessels, were obliged to charter them to any foreigners that would take them, at a very low price ; and that many ships, of great value, to the amount of an immense quantity of tonnage, and some of which cost their owners from 15,000l. to 20,000l. each, were left unoccupied, and continued decaying in harbour. It is no wonder, therefore, that property in ship-
ping

ping experienced great depreciation. Not a few who embarked their capitals in that property have suffered severe losses. Speculation has been cramped and deterred. And we who have been invidiously termed the carriers of Europe, have no longer the means of keeping in employment a large quantity of shipping now on hand, and which will soon rot in the ports where they are laid up*.

I object, therefore, to the suspension of any ^{Consequent ob-} part of the Navigation Laws of Great Britain. ^{jections.}
 I object, in this instance, because such suspension must render all England a free port, of the consequences of which, I conceive, neither the legislature nor the country are sufficiently aware; and because, however it may seem to be subservient to partial and mistaken interests, it is, for so much, a sacrifice of those old and established principles, under which we have flourished, and which have so long been the
 object

* See Case of the Owners of British Ships, &c. published 3d December 1803.

object of applause and imitation, both at home and abroad.

The violation of
the Navigation
Laws injurious
to every branch
of our Marine.

It might be thought almost superfluous to state, except for the purpose of explanation, how necessary it is to encourage, in a country like ours, the employment of Seamen, and to retain the various artificers necessary to the manufacture of ship-building ; a manufacture infinitely more essential in an empire, dependent on its marine, even than that of wool. Of the latter manufacture we are usually careful, and any proposition by which it might be endangered, would be received with indignation. But the former, I am sorry to say, is often neglected or impeded ; and repeated violations of our colonial and navigation code have taken place, within a few years, and with little observation. As far as mere words and general expressions can go, our Navigation Laws have strenuous assertors ; but few, very few indeed, look to the principle or object of those laws, though the violations of them that have taken place, tended obviously to diminish the means of retaining

retaining our seamen, and the multitude of persons employed in the several branches of ship-building and rigging; and consequently, to deprive us of the power of equipping, when necessary, a great naval force; or, in other words, of resisting our enemies, and of maintaining our prosperity and our independence.

At best, and under all the operation of our Navigation Laws, it is not easy to retain our seamen and our naval artizans, and to equip such a force. It generally requires two years of exertion and of war to put our navy on an adequate footing; and the want of sailors is occasionally so great, that we can scarcely supply our fleet by the harshest measures, and sometimes see many of our vessels laid up through the want of crews. If the sailors, then, be discouraged, as they must be by those suspensions or infringements which I combat, the consequences cannot but be mischievous in the extreme. The enemy may be at our doors before we shall be prepared to resist; and the boasted bulwarks

Adverse to the prompt equipment of a great naval force.

bulwarks of England may become little more than dismantled and unavailing citadels.

Consequence already experienced.

The notion of encouraging the Americans to build ships for us, in order that they might be enabled to pay for the manufactures with which we supplied them, is utterly indefensible. There would be equal reason to allow the Dutch the same advantage with the same view. The consequence of this very encouragement has been already felt, and as long as it is continued, the classes of artificers connected with ship-building were found to emigrate in much greater numbers than those of any other manufacture.

Extraordinary decline of British tonnage.

The following statement, produced with exultation by the Americans themselves, will prove that, as the quantity of British tonnage occupied in the American trade has diminished, under the system which has been pursued, that of America has uniformly and proportionably increased :

1789	British tonnage.....	72,000
	American do.	21,000
1792	British tonnage.....	51,000
	American do.	60,000
1800	British tonnage.....	14,000
	American do.	110,000

In this manner has England suffered from a foolish policy, and every step which deviated from her established Navigation Laws, has proved an injury to the trade, which, in wiser times, has been so cautiously encouraged, as one of the most fertile sources of political consequence and national wealth.

In the above instance, at least, the Americans have not exaggerated, as will appear from the following account which was laid on the table of the House of Commons on the 25th of February 1802.

Account of the number of vessels, with their tonnage, which have cleared inwards and outwards,

wards, between Great Britain and the American States, in the following years :

		British.		Americans.	
		<i>Ships,</i>	<i>Tonnage.</i>	<i>Ships,</i>	<i>Tonnage.</i>
1790	Outwards.....	245	50,977	218	39,441
	Inwards.....	312	64,197	246	45,234
1791	Outwards.....	253	55,328	291	55,806
	Inwards.....	247	53,102	318	62,253
1792	Outwards.....	223	50,963	285	59,414
	Inwards.....	197	42,035	313	64,085
1799	Outwards.....	57	14,267	354	78,683
	Inwards.....	42	9,796	343	75,225
1800	Outwards.....	62	14,381	507	112,596
	Inwards.....	77	27,144	550	124,015

American exultation.

The Americans, indeed, who have exhibited the former account, appear to be a little sarcastic on the occasion. But their sarcasms may be instructive. While they dwell on the folly which presumed to tamper with the Navigation Laws of England, they inform us, that America was busy in forming and maintaining a Navigation Act of her own: while, as patriots, they enjoy the prospect of the increasing prosperity

prosperity of their country, they triumph, as rivals, in the decline of Britain. "Think of this," says one of them, "think of this, ye sages of Britain, and if you can account for the phenomenon on any other principle than the superior policy of my country, it is more than I can!"

It is true, the policy of America has not been unwise; it affords a striking contrast to our weakness, and virtually reproaches us for our neglect of all sound and rational principles. Yet, if we be thus reminded that, at the very moment when we were extending and renouncing to the Americans our carrying trade, they were active, by all possible restrictions, to exclude us from theirs; we should also recollect, and be instructed by the recollection, that our liberality was but that of the prodigal who gives without return, and who enriches others to impoverish himself*.

c

It

* "It was found expedient," says General Smith, in the debate in the Lower House of Congress on the 16th
December

A more particular view of the subject.

It may be useful as well as curious to consider this subject a little more minutely. In the year 1800, a census was taken, and returned to Congress in the year 1801; according to which the progress of the tonnage, commerce, and revenue, of the United States, were found to be as follows :

	Tons of Shipping.	Men.
In 1800.	939,000	56,340
In 1790.....	450,000	27,000
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Increase in ten years	489,000	29,000'

COM-

December 1801, “to adopt a system pursued by other Nations, in laying such duties as would discriminate between our own and foreign tonnage, and the measure operated like a charm; for, contrary to the expectation of most men, our tonnage doubled in a short period, and we will not only very soon be able to carry all our own produce, *but to enter largely into trade abroad.*” Very true, but their tonnage was *doubled* at our expence; and we most amicably laboured in unison with themselves to enable them to *enter largely into trade abroad.*

COMMERCE AND REVENUE.

Dollars,

The American produce exported in

1800, amounted to..... 32,000,000

Ditto in 1790..... 14,000,000

 Increase in ten years 18,000,000

Dollars.

The foreign commodities brought
into the country for re-exportation

in 1800, amounted to..... 30,000,000

Ditto in 1790..... 2,000,000

 Increase in ten years 28,000,000

The revenue in 1801 is estimated at 11,000,000

Ditto in 1789 amounted to..... 6,124,000

 Increase in eleven years 5,235,000

This is a splendid view of rapidly progressive prosperity. But it was in this very period of

ten years that our carrying trade with America most rapidly declined; that our tonnage employed in that trade fell, according to the American account, from 72,000 to 14,000; that the suspension of our Navigation Laws operated principally in favour of the United States; that we even opened to them a free trade with the British settlements in the East; and that we *anticipated* their expectations on the subject of the abolition of the duties, and of the counter-vailing duties permitted under the treaty of 1794 *. Shall it, then, any longer be said, that
Britain

* “ We find,” says Mr. President Jefferson, in his address to Congress on the 15th December 1802, “ in some parts of Europe, monopolizing discriminations; which, in the form of duties, tend effectually to prohibit the carrying thither our own produce in our own vessels.

But it is with satisfaction I lay before you an Act of the British Parliament, *anticipating* this subject, so far as to authorize a mutual abolition of the duties and counter-vailing duties permitted under the treaty of 1794. It shews, on their part, a spirit of moderation and justice,’ &c. &c. We shall soon see what this *moderation* and *justice* were.

Britain has not cherished this thriving branch of American prosperity at the expence of her own welfare? or can we yet deny *that we have given, but not received, and they have received, but not given?*

It is not because I regret the increase of their trade that I make these observations; but I shall not shrink from asserting the impolicy of suffering that increase to arise from the errors and sacrifices of this country, and to its essential detriment.

Observations dictated not by jealousy of American prosperity, but regret for the sacrifices of Britain.

The countervailing duties which were laid in this country, were posterior and provoked, and dictated and compelled by the absurd yet designing conduct of the Americans themselves. It is well known that on the peace and separation of the Americans from Great Britain, they and their abettors in this country, entertained the extraordinary notion that, in matters of trade, they should not be considered by Great Britain as foreigners, though they themselves had chosen and asserted that very situation; and they particularly

Countervailing duties, their origin and termination.

ticularly pretended, in direct opposition to our whole colonial and navigation principles, that they should have a free trade to our West-India Colonies. They did not even rest their claims on the arguments of negotiation, but endeavoured to sustain them by stronger means: and, vainly flattering themselves, that the trade with them was absolutely necessary to our commercial existence, they attempted to frighten us into concession, by laying extraordinary and extravagant duties on all merchandize coming from hence, and particularly on our shipping. They did not conceive, at the time, that we should have had the spirit to counteract such a measure by countervailing duties. But they found themselves mistaken; and, discovering that the duties to be paid by them would far exceed those which they had imposed on us, as the quantity of their shipping employed in the trade between the two countries was much greater than ours, they very wisely desired that the duties on both sides should cease. The "*moderation and justice*" of Great Britain, as they were termed by Mr. President Jefferson, consented, accordingly, to this

mutual

mutual abolition of duty. A benefit was renounced by this country which resulted from our retaliating the injurious measures of America. And the Americans, after having tried the effect of a crooked policy, were placed on the footing of the most favoured nations; to which, indeed, there can be no objection, unless our Navigation Laws are to be suspended, by the operation of some Dutch Property Act, or any other law to the same effect.

If we were even indebted to America for exclusive favour and kindness, I scarcely think we should renounce the means of sustaining the trade and independence of Great Britain. To sacrifice that which concerns the very existence of a nation, must be very absurd and very criminal. The Americans, however, as we have already seen, take care, day after day, that we shall not be in their debt. Their policy, (which I do not condemn though I would be instructed by it) looks not to confer, but to receive. They negotiate and they obtain, and they then talk of "*liberality and justice*;" but, while donation

is considered and stated as equity, they leave to us the praise of being just, not generous, and wisely reserve for themselves the solid advantages of a menacing and successful negotiation*.

Some

* I should not state myself thus without reason. The war which has been rekindled in Europe has afforded the Americans the opportunity of making new acquisitions, to which, at any other period, neither France nor Spain would have consented; and the menacing attitude in which they placed themselves, seems to have succeeded admirably to their wishes. They have given sufficient hints of what may be expected from them, and we should therefore be on our guard. A late report on the subject of Louisiana and the Mississippi, after stating, in an imperious tone, the absolute necessity of acquiring that immense country and river, says, very deliberately, that “ the Floridas, too, must be, at one time or another, annexed to America, by purchase or by conquest.” I hope we are not yet in the situation of being told, that Jamaica is also necessary to the *arrondissement* of their policy.— In this instance, the scholar has improved upon his master; since Buonaparte, even in his *familiar* conversation with Lord Whitworth, did not presume to say more than
that

Some of the West-India merchants and planters join in the claims advanced by the Americans; and seem to conceive that they would derive much more benefit than can be reasonably expected, from the opening of their ports to the American

Unreasonable
claims and
conduct of
some West
India mer-
chants.

that "sooner or later, Egypt would belong to France, either by the falling to pieces of the Turkish Empire, or by some arrangement with the Porte."

Nations as well as individuals are liable to fits of wrong-headedness; sometimes, I believe, termed enthusiasm, and relative to which there can be no calculation. Otherwise, I should think there would be little danger of the Americans choosing absolute war with us, in consequence of our maintaining the old navigation principles of the country. They are a sensible people. Their minds are turned to considerations of their own interest; the interior of their country could not possibly be benefited by hostilities with us: and the mischiefs which could be done to our commerce by privateers, manned with renegadoes from Great Britain, would afford no compensation for the entire derangement of their trade, the chief dependence of their maritime towns, in which is contained the greater part of their population, power, and wealth.

American shipping. On this subject my opinion has never varied. The demands of a few interested or speculative men are not to be listened to, when they are hostile to the general welfare; and, though some benefit might accrue, which, however, we shall soon see cannot be obtained, from the measures proposed, I should yet maintain, what long experience and repeated information have taught me to believe, that the policy of excluding foreign shipping from our colonies, and in truth the whole navigation system, are founded in the clearest right and most perfect wisdom.

The right of
England to
frame Colo-
nial and Na-
vigation
Laws, ex-
amined and
stated.

In many instances of late, as I have already observed, foreign writers have been anxious to decry the Navigation Laws of England, as injurious to the welfare of surrounding nations. Prejudice, passion, partiality, and interest, have all conspired to excite much ill-will, and abundant jealousy, on a question which, if fairly stated, would produce no such effect. It is not merely America; it is not merely the North of Europe that has promoted discussions of this nature.

nature. The government of France has particularly encouraged and inflamed such discussion in other nations; and one of its most sophistical and determined agents, Monsieur Hauterive, secretary to Monsieur Talleyrand, secretary for foreign affairs, having been employed on the subject, a volume has issued from the Consular press to detail to all Europe the *commercial crimes* of Great Britain, and the *monstrous depravity* of her commercial laws. It may not, therefore, be improper to enter a little into the inquiry which thus suggests itself; and, if error and prejudice have gone abroad, on a topic which so immediately concerns the character and welfare of this country, I hope I shall not be censured as digressive, if I very briefly endeavour to correct them.

In a general view it will scarcely be maintained by reasonable men, that Great Britain has been guilty of any injustice towards other nations in framing such a system of Navigation Laws as her circumstances required. Every country has an unqualified right to open or close
its

its ports in whatever manner the welfare of its people may demand. The law of nations, in the opinion of Grotius, Puffendorf and Vattel, has nothing to do with regulations for promoting the internal industry of a people, provided those regulations infringe no actual right of other States; and no government has even yet presumed to demand an unqualified admission to foreign ports, but such as were at its merey. The universal practice is founded on these principles. All nations have thought themselves permitted to regulate their trade by prohibitive statutes. We see every where commercial restraints continued and multiplied. And no legislature has ever rejected Navigation Acts, but on the contrary adopted them, whenever it was their interest to do so; nor have they ever afforded unrestricted entrance to foreign trade from any tender regard to the advantage of other countries. America has not been so liberal. The Maritime Powers of the North of Europe have not displayed such *enlightened* policy. France, amid all her boasts of liberty and equality, and all her out-cries against the commerce of England,

has

has demonstrated to the world, by decree after decree, varied, annulled, or renewed as her policy required, that she also has no objection to extend her *despotism* over the ocean*. We are not therefore to say, that Britain only is unjust, because

* See Gentz's State of Europe before and after the French Revolution.—France knows very well when to affect the right and when to follow the expedient ; but even when she appears to withdraw her power, she is still, in reality, occupied in what has been termed by Camille Desmoulins, “ *the sublime vocation of disorganizing Europe.*” She has lately, indeed, talked much, by her declaimer Hauterive, of commercial freedom, of open ports, and unrestricted trade, because she has no commerce left to be regulated by prohibition, and because she wishes to contrast the liberality which costs her nothing, with the pretended tyranny of England. But when occasion required, she had no difficulty in retracting all these liberal opinions and decrees. Mons. Ræderer, in his “ *Dix Huit Brumaire,*” tells us (and he occupied a high office in the French Government), that the Batavian, Helvetic, and Cisalpine Republics, have derived from their union with France nothing but rapine, devastation and anarchy ; that the depredations committed by the French privateers principally

cause she, too, thinks it proper to promote and regulate by law the commercial activity of her people, and to exercise a power over her own ports, productions, merchants and ships.

All well informed writers on the subject have admitted, that commercial regulation, of this nature, is no infringement of the law of nations.

But

pally led to the rupture between America and France ; and that the Danish Flag was eternally subjected to equal vexations and affronts. He adds, what attests the most overbearing despotism, that, “when the people of Holland sent supplies of grain to their colonies, which, otherwise, must surrender to the English, from absolute want, the supplies were audaciously intercepted by the French privateers, and the vessels which contained them declared good prizes, under the authority of vexatious laws, and, sometimes, by judges immediately interested in the trade of the privateers themselves,” p. 165, &c.—This is the mild, liberal, and magnanimous France, under whose auspices liberty is to be given to the Sea, and the Commercial Despotism of Great Britain to be humbled in the dust !

But the argument becomes yet stronger, if we suppose that such commercial regulation may be necessary, not merely to the trade, but to the safety and independence of a nation. If a country, for instance, be in danger of famine, or if her security depend upon her armies and fleets, would it not be absurd to say, that she may not, without a breach of the law of nations, prescribe rules for her corn trade, or provide for the maintenance of her fleets and armies?—England is in this very situation. A navy is essential to her existence; an extensive navigation is required to support her navy; and the first principles of preservative justice, consequently, warrant her to promote her navigation, by such internal and external regulations as do not affect the absolute right of foreign States.

Having complained of the misrepresentations and cavils of foreign writers, on the subject of our commercial system, I have much pleasure in observing, that Mr. Gentz has ably supported the right of every independent country to make such laws as it may deem necessary to regulate its trade

Some opinions
of Mr. Gentz
reviewed.

trade and navigation*. I respect his judgment, candour and learning, and I therefore still more regret that he should have advanced some unfounded and erroneous opinions on the spirit and tendency of the Navigation Laws of Great Britain. As a foreigner, perhaps, he could not obtain sufficient information on a question of so local a nature; and, if I should advert at all to the errors which affect that part of his work to which I allude, I shall do so not to censure the author, but to point out the mistake.

He

* Citizen Hauterive's work is a choice specimen of modern French declamation and verbiage, equally void of taste and regardless of fact. It was not necessary to notice it in this country, but it has induced M. Gentz, Counsellor at War to his Prussian Majesty, &c. to publish on the Continent, where it will be very useful, an answer, which, in respect to clearness, good-sense, and sound political discussion, has seldom been surpassed. The excellent statement in the translator's preface respecting the question of Neutral Bottoms, renders further reading on that subject perfectly unnecessary.

He says the Navigation Laws are “*commercially injurious*” to us, but he admits they are politically wise. Yet if, (as I flatter myself I have shewn, or shall be able to shew) they promote the employment, and augment the number of our seamen ; if they encourage ship-building and all the useful arts connected with that essential trade ; if they consequently provide occupations for innumerable artizans ; if they secure to us the carriage of our own produce, as well as the supply of the most valuable markets, they cannot possibly be *commercially injurious* to us. Mr. Gentz himself admits, “that they are important instruments of the greatness and security of the State—that they have afforded a powerful stimulative to the commercial marine of England—that they have tended to secure to the nation, the freight trade, that great source of the former astonishing riches of Holland—that the consummation of them has been the consequence of the most judicious policy—that they compelled the English to cultivate with their own vessels, their own sailors, and their own capitals, many branches of foreign trade which

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would,

would, *otherwise*, have remained, partly or entirely in the hands of strangers—that they encouraged a branch of national industry which contributed to the security and independence of Great Britain—and that, as he quotes Mr. Adam Smith, however they may have been dictated by national antipathy, they are, nevertheless, as wise as if they had been the productions of consummate wisdom*.” Here, then, there is no reason for regarding them as injurious to the commerce of Great Britain; and the respectable writer has admitted premises, from which a conclusion might be drawn very different from the inferences he has stated.

For my own part, I see every where, and on every occasion, decided proofs both of the commercial

* The notion that the Navigation Law of Cromwell was merely an effort of resentment against the Dutch, in 1651, is erroneous. The principle is to be found in the early Charters for founding Colonies in America, and long before in the Maritime Law of Europe.

mercial and political utility of those laws, the effects of which have been so erroneously described. Defence and independence are more important than wealth, and therefore, if they contributed only to the former, we should abundantly prize them. But they are the foundation of the whole, both of our maritime power and trade. Under their influence English commerce has diffused itself over all the world. Under their influence that commerce, which, otherwise, would have fallen to decay, has been assured of the protection of an irresistible navy, and has gone forth to the four corners of the globe without the apprehension of insult or depredation. When, therefore, I observe activity, and labour, and enterprize excited and encouraged, and honourable and ample wealth thus earned and obtained, under a system which few men have the disposition fully to examine, and some with inconsiderate levity condemn, I estimate the cause by its effects, and become more and more anxious to rescue from innovation a code which has been, and continues to be, pro-

ductive of such various and inestimable advantages.

The object of
founding colonies.

I further observe, that when the power and population of Great Britain were employed to establish and maintain colonies in America and the West-Indies, the object was not the founding of cities, nor the extension of empire, but it was to secure to ourselves the perpetual supply of valuable markets, and the consequent employment of a greater quantity of shipping. The colonies were, therefore, to be retained under the direction of the Mother Country, or the great object in founding them was at an end; and commercial restriction, and monopoly of the British market in return, were naturally to become the leading principles of colonial intercourse, in order to secure to the founders some return for the immense expence of establishment and protection.

English restriction not singular.

England is by no means singular in maintaining and acting on this principle. The means, indeed, which she has adopted for securing to herself

herself the trade of her colonies are more liberal than those which have been employed by other nations: but the principle of all the Mother Countries of Europe has been of the same nature and tendency; and all have alike sought to bring into their own ports the most important produce of their colonies, and to retain, in full monopoly, the exclusive advantage of their supply.

It is not now necessary to examine whether this system be impolitic or unwise. Experience and the opinion of the best informed men demonstrate that it must continue to be inviolably maintained. England is not to confer free commerce and navigation in return for the vexations and restrictions which are imposed by other nations; and though the Navigation Laws were not, as they are too firmly and too long established to be tampered with by experimental speculators, they would yet require to be cautiously and rigorously supported, if it were only because they are best correspondent with the views and regulations of other States, and be-

Rendered necessary by the systems of other countries.

cause, so long as other States confine the trade of their colonies to themselves, England has not only a right, but is bound to act in the same manner.

This is the very doctrine of the 15th of Charles II.—The Preamble to that Act very judiciously states the motive of the Navigation System to be “the maintenance of a greater correspondence and kindness between the subjects at home and those in the plantations; the making the colonies yet more advantageous to the Mother Country, in the further employment and increase of English shipping; the rendering the navigation to and from the colonies more easy and cheap; and making this kingdom a staple, not only of the commodities of the plantations, but also of other countries, for the supply of them, it being the usage of other nations to keep the plantation trade to themselves.”

By the peculiar
circumstances
and situation
of England

These general doctrines are to be confirmed by particular reasons. England, contracted in extent, and far inferior in the number of her people

people to other nations, is always liable to the hostility of enemies, whose physical strength is much superior to her own. To her insular situation, therefore, and to her Navy, she must be indebted for her defence ; but it should never be forgotten, that the moment the latter shall decline, the former will become useless. The myriads of France might, in such a case, be easily poured upon her shores ; she would be inevitably exposed to insult, and, perhaps, to subjugation ; and after having been the support of nations and the vindicatrix of Europe ; after having restrained, and often chastized, the ambition of the State, whose waking and sleeping visions are full of universal dominion, and particularly the conquest of this country ; she would be cast from the eminence to which she has ascended by the means she is recommended to support, and gradually, or suddenly, decline into a province beneath the oppression of France. Who, then, shall maintain that she should risk an iota of the system on which her naval superiority is founded ? And what must be the consequence, if abandoning that system, our ship-

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wrights

wrights be discouraged ; the countless arts and artizans, connected with our marine, be permitted to decline and to diminish ; the manufacture of ships transferred to foreigners ; and the carrying trade renounced, as it has already been, in a considerable degree, to other nations ?

And of Europe. It is not England alone that is concerned in these views—The interests of England involve those of almost all the surrounding States. Of the leading Powers of the Continent, some have been enfeebled by past exertions, and others, from whatever motive, repose in a dangerous and ill-judged neutrality. In the mean time, France advances in ambition and strength ; adds territory to territory ; crushes the feeble, enslaves the cowardly, alarms the strong. Her councils are incomparably more violent and ferocious, and her powers are greater than those of Lewis XIV. or probably of any other despot ; and every day some new menace is uttered or is realized. In this situation of things, what is to become the bulwark of Europe, but the Navy of England ?

England? and what the foundation of that Navy, but Navigation and Trade? The very Powers which decry our Navigation Laws are concerned to support them; and this country derives new arguments for maintaining the code on which, even in the confession of her enemies, its greatness rests, as well from a regard to her own consequence, as from the occurrences of the times, and the gloomy circumstances of the greatest part of Europe.

Not long since Great Britain had to sustain a principle of great importance, and she sustained it with firmness and with vigour. When she was abandoned by all her allies; when the several Maritime Powers of Europe had combined against her; when she had risked her last and only army in the plains of Egypt; she, nevertheless, thought it necessary to risk her principal fleet also, against all the Powers of the North, in order to maintain her right of visiting neutral bottoms. But that right, however incumbent it might have been to maintain it, is
of

of secondary consideration, compared with the necessity of preserving inviolate the principles which have hitherto enabled us to preserve that naval superiority, without which our right to inspect neutral bottoms would be a shadow. Surely, if the right be of importance, that which empowers us to vindicate the right is incomparably more so ; the right is comparatively of temporary value, but the system on which alone it is to be preserved, is of permanent necessity ; and yet, such is our infatuation, that we often manifest a disposition to fritter away the essence of the system, even while we hazard the existence of the Empire in pursuit of inferior objects.

Importance of
navigation
system eviden-
ced by facts.

When I assert the importance of that system to the commercial and maritime prosperity of this country, I rest my opinion on no abstract and theoretic grounds, but on the strong and stubborn evidence of experience and of fact. For some time after the American war, the increase of our shipping was rapid and extraordinary :

nary: and Lord Liverpool*, and other very intelligent men, have not hesitated to ascribe that increase to the policy, and the policy alone, with which England then inviolably maintained her navigation and colonial principles. Whereas, in the course of the last ten or twelve years, a very extraordinary revolution has taken place: and, while we were renouncing our old and wise regulations, encouraging the carrying trade of foreigners against ourselves, and admitting other nations to ports which should have been open only to our own commerce, it has been found that the number of vessels employed by Britain in the American trade has diminished as rapidly as it formerly increased,

* I embrace with pleasure the opportunity afforded me of observing, that this country is much indebted to Lord Liverpool, for his intelligent and persevering support of the question relative to the intercourse of the Americans with our colonies; and, although he may have been obliged to yield too much on this point, there is reason to conclude that he is, in principle, the decided friend of our colonial system.

increased, and America has been enabled to boast, that the aggregate of her tonnage, including that of her small naval force, is, as we have seen, 939,000 ; that is within about 15,000 tons of what is known to have been the whole commercial tonnage of England in the year 1787*. Hence conclusions might be drawn yet stronger, perhaps, than those already stated ; and it would appear not only that our commerce and marine are intimately connected with our Navigation System, but that, as that system is infringed,

* A return, made about two years after the passing of the Register Act, which is more accurate than any that had ever been made before, and which proved the quantity of our tonnage to be considerably more than had been supposed, states that, in the year 1787, the ships and tonnage of England and Scotland were as follows :

	Ships.	Tonnage.
England.....	8711	954,729
Scotland.....	1700	133,084

It should be observed, however, that the East-India ships then at sea are not included in the above tonnage.

infringed, or maintained, they are to flourish or to decline.

We sometimes talk, nevertheless, very lightly on the claims of the Americans, and listen very stoically to those of some of the West Indians ; but we neither sufficiently weigh them in their nature and tendency, nor are we often sufficiently aware of the danger of compliance. Yet that danger even the slightest view of our West India trade will render obvious. The number of vessels employed in our commerce, twelve years ago, with that part of the world, as appears by the report of the committee of the Privy Council, in the year 1791, amounted to upwards of 740, containing 154,643 tons*. This is great in a commercial, but still greater in a political estimate. For the sailors so employed are of the
utmost

* This statement does not include the vessels employed between the remaining British Colonies, and the British Islands in the West-Indies, and which amount to 52, containing 4837 tons.

utmost importance to the marine strength of the nation ; and, while those engaged in distant voyages are not to be obtained for the purpose of our Navy, these are always at command, and can always be added, on emergency, to the naval force of the kingdom. Of such a trade, in proportion as the prosperity is great, the system on which it has advanced is wise. If you touch that system with a rude and incautious hand, you may shake the key-stone of the whole structure. If you tamper with that trade, and send it adrift, you may destroy in wantonness what is so necessary to your existence, and sacrifice to light and ruinous innovation, that very portion of British commerce, which, from the nature and bulkiness of the merchandize, is most productive of wealth, and of the employment of shipping and seamen, and most essential to the maintenance of our maritime superiority. It must be repeated, and with deep concern, that we often inconsiderately sacrifice to mercantile speculation, or partial and mistaken interests, the essential principles of Laws and Systems, under which we had flourished, and
which

which had been the object of applause and imitation at home and abroad*.

I use this strong language because I am apprehensive of change. Some of the West-India merchants, more than once, and that with every management and clamour, have laboured to accomplish their views of an unrestricted intercourse with America; and though their efforts failed, and their arguments were thought to be refuted, I have known the activity of zeal or imaginary interest carry so many points, and the attention and prudence which should watch over public affairs so often suspended, that I should scarcely be surprised at any result. On the occasion of the treaty of 1794 with the American States, we know they proceeded so far in conjunction with the Americans, as to obtain the important and mischievous concession, that American vessels, not exceeding 70 tons, should enjoy a free trade to the West Indian ports. Fortunately for us the Americans were dissatisfied with the limitation, but though they sus-
pended

The Navigation, Corn and Poor Laws, have all been altered without attention to the true spirit of them.

pended the ratification of the Article, (and they should in future be kept at their word) the fact is still the same, and still continues to speak a very forcible admonition. I am therefore apprehensive; and that apprehension, as it possibly may be useful to disclose it, I am not solicitous to conceal. They who take these affairs into their own hands are, of all others, perhaps the least fit to form a solid judgment on them; their pursuits and their attentions have not been previously pointed to such subjects; they are too apt to listen to those who have a measure to carry, or a prejudice to maintain; and, however conversant they may be in theory, and theoretic writings, which often mislead, they have not sufficient practical knowledge to comprehend the full meaning and probable consequences of what is proposed.

Not merely a
naval force,
but the whole
dependence
and utility of
colonies con-
nected with
the question.

I dwell much and anxiously in this question, on the connection of our Navigation Laws with the existence of our Navy. But, in truth, what I have already intimated, the subject involves not merely the maintenance of our Navy,
but

but the whole use, and advantage, and dependence of our colonies. Sir Josiah Child, speaking of our West-India Islands, maintains, that “ if they were not kept to the rules of the Act of Navigation, the consequence would be, that, in a few years, the benefit of them would be wholly lost to the nation.” Mr. Adam Smith frequently implies the same persuasion, and asserts unequivocally, “ that the same Act is the wisest of all the commercial regulations of England.” These conclusions, and this approbation, sanctioned by such names, cannot but be of great weight ; and I do not hesitate to assert my own persuasion, not only that, if the admittance of American shipping into the West-India ports is to be allowed, those Islands would become dependent on the American States ; and that, rather than surrender the carrying trade to the Islands, it would be incomparably better to renounce the Islands themselves.

Let it be remembered that Britain derives no benefit from her West-India colonies, except those accruing to her navigation, manufactures, and agriculture, by supplying their wants,

and by the monopoly of their carrying trade; and it is those advantages alone, procured and preserved by the Navigation System, which can countervail, in any respect, the enormous expence of protecting them. The same articles which they furnish, might be purchased at least twenty per cent. cheaper at other markets, and the same revenue would arise from them, if they came through the Dutch, the Danes, or the French. I see not, therefore, why we should make the sacrifices expected from us, either with respect to America, or the Islands : with respect to America, because there can be no doubt of her continuing to take from us more than she can pay for; and with respect to the Islands, because the monopoly which they enjoy of the British market, secures to them a better price than they could elsewhere obtain. There is no friendship in commerce. The Americans, particularly, had no object but commercial advantage in all their negotiations. Even before the æra of their independence, they avoided taking from this country, as much as they could, those articles which were not absolutely necessary to them,

them, or which they could obtain at other markets with greater advantage*. And when we consider, besides, that our trade is infinitely more necessary to them than theirs to us; that by taking our commodities they are enabled to trade on British capital; and that our exports to them, at best, are much less than is generally supposed; we shall, I hope, feel yet more disinclined to yield to their avidity any principle of those laws which have been so universally regarded as the ground work of our commercial and naval superiority.

But I observe further mischief likely to flow from any suspension of our Navigation System.

The Americans will naturally make all possible use of their admission into the West-India ports.

Their merchants, probably, will not be more de-

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licate

The suspension of the Navigation Laws further mischievous—
1st. As it must promote a clandestine intercourse between America and the Islands.

* I do not mean this invidiously. It is but what might be expected from any people in the same situation; and I make the observation merely to remind the reader, that commercial selfishness is not to be charged solely to the account of Great Britain.

licate than those of other nations. The emoluments of contraband trade will be added to the profits of legitimate commerce: and there can be little doubt but that a considerable portion of such foreign European manufactures, East-India goods, and other articles as shall be required by the Islands, and have been hitherto furnished by British vessels, will be clandestinely supplied by American bottoms; and that the officers of the customs will be found but a feeble check to so illicit and mischievous a trade.

2dly, As it must enable America directly to supply foreign markets with the produce of the Islands.

Under such circumstances they will become the carriers to the Islands of provision and lumber, and they will in return bring back cargoes of sugar, coffee, molasses and rum. The consequences will be felt in a two-fold manner by England. The price of the above mentioned articles will be raised on the British consumer; and America will be enabled possibly to dispute with us, and certainly to participate, the advantages of supplying, with such valuable commodities, the wants and demands of foreign markets.

But

But the subject merits further observation. On an average of three years, during which our Navigation Laws were suspended, or infringed, that is, of 1795, 1796, and 1797, American vessels, amounting to 1289, containing 139,911 tons, and navigated by 8702 men, entered the several ports of the British West-Indies, and 1231 American vessels, containing 128,924 tons, and 8440 men, cleared out from them. If, therefore, the opening of the ports of the Islands should be continued or renewed, it is clear that the navigation of this kingdom, and its dependencies, must experience a momentous loss : for it must lessen at least in proportion to the tonnage and number of men abovementioned to be employed, since so much will be taken from the carrying trade of this nation*, and the very

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loss

* The diminution will be considerably greater. The American trade with the Islands, if it should be permitted, will, it is probable, very much and very rapidly increase ; and every additional vessel and man which may be, consequently, employed by America, may be estimated as a loss of so much to British trade.

loss of the freightage of such a number of vessels, would be an evil of great magnitude, and great mischief.

3dly, As it must transfer to foreigners the supply trade of the Islands.

In fact the Americans, so privileged, would be able to monopolize the whole, or the greater portion of the supply of our Islands. They would enjoy, whenever we were at war, all the advantages of peace insurance, peace wages, peace freight, and peace contingencies of every kind; and, at all times, they would be able to make perhaps a treble voyage*, in about half the time which a British vessel requires to make one full freightage to the West-Indies and back†. Under all these local and other advantages in favour of America, we assuredly could offer no effectual competition.

* One, for instance, from America to the Islands, another from the Islands to Europe, and a third from Europe back again to America.

† Our vessels in general go out with about one quarter freight, or in ballast, and make but one voyage in the year.

competition. We should, on the contrary, be destined to see the whole of the West-India trade snatched, in a short period, from our hands, and consequently the rapid increase of the American navy, and proportional decline of our own. The transfer of the trade would amount to a transfer of seamen; and the seamen so transferred, would soon learn to regard the country that owned the vessels in which they plied as their own, and be thus lost to England for ever.

I must now protest, and I wish to do so in the strongest manner, against a most unbecoming practice which has prevailed, and lately been extended, that of conducting the trade of this country under licenses granted by the Privy Council. The granting of those licenses has been considered as a mere matter of form, and the licenses themselves were to be obtained for about ten pounds. To all such proceedings, as it appears to me, there are invincible objections; and my wish is to prevent, particularly during peace, any suspension whatever of the Naviga-

Licenses from
the Privy
Council, &c.
considered.

tion Laws, and yet more such extreme abuse of them as prevailed in the West-Indies, through the licenses granted there by the governors for all shipping, particularly Americans, to enter, and which practice became common for the sake of the emolument of persons in office.

Navigation
Laws not to
be sacrificed
by treaty
without the
previous con-
sideration of
parliament.

Above all, I wish that the most essential parts of the Navigation Laws should never be yielded by treaty, without previously referring the business to the consideration of parliament; for I cannot conceive, that to lay a treaty before parliament, when *concluded*, and when the mischief is done, is, in any respect, to submit it to their consideration; nor that it is constitutional to yield any thing, *contrary to the law of the land*, by a *commercial* treaty, without the knowledge and acquiescence of the legislature. I should not, however, have made this remark, if an instance had not occurred to justify it, in the 12th article of the commercial treaty with America, to which I have already alluded—Ministers seem, at that time, to have taken advantage of the apprehensions of the country, and of the

the necessity of union ; the people were likely to submit to any thing that was proposed ; and the Navigation Laws were completely suspended, as Magna Charta, which is not so essential to our existence as an independent nation, would possibly have been, under similar circumstances.

Before a measure of this kind, however, shall again take place, the question, I hope, will be candidly submitted to the consideration of parliament. But, if the licenses and suspensions of which I have complained, should be continued or renewed, it will be necessary to bring forward some inquiry respecting the state of our Navigation Laws, for the sake of protesting, not only against that measure, but against permitting American vessels, contrary to the whole tenor of our colonial system, to enter our West-India ports. Such an inquiry would probably produce a full discussion of the subject ; and I should offer and be able to establish at the bar of the house, by the testimony of several of the
most

most respectable merchants and others, the following propositions:

General recapitulation.

That the commercial policy of admitting goods, the produce of all countries, in any foreign vessels, or the supply of our colonies by foreign shipping, departs entirely from those principles under which our navigation has so much prospered.

That all deviation from those principles must ultimately prove injurious to our carrying trade, and to our commerce; and that, should the permission given to American vessels, even of limited tonnage, to enter our West-India ports, be continued, a wide channel will be opened to the smuggler, to the injury of the fair trader, as well as of the revenue.

That such permission will enable the contraband dealer to introduce clandestinely into our Islands, in American shipping, a considerable portion of the European and East-India goods, hitherto supplied by Great Britain, and that the
officers

officers of the customs will be found but a feeble and insufficient check to that mischievous traffic.

That the allowing American vessels to trade to our Islands, under the pretence of supplying them with lumber and provisions more regularly, and at a cheaper rate, is fallacious; because America does not carry cheaper than Britain, and because the freight in British and American vessels has always been the same, and is, in fact, the principal object of that commerce on the part of the Americans.

That British merchants will not fit out ships to carry on the supply trade of the Islands, if they shall be liable to be interrupted by the *transient* ships of the American States, the supply by which is peculiarly fluctuating, and sometimes extravagant in respect to price, and is by no means so certain and steady as that which is carried by British vessels, regularly stationed on the trade.

That

That it is, therefore, the indisputable interest of the Islands, as well as of the Empire, that the trade, instead of being subjected to the irregular speculative mode practised by the Americans, should be carried on by British shipping, properly stationed in the Islands.

That if the entry of American ships be granted, our Islands will become entirely dependent on the American States.

That the Americans, though, in return for provisions and lumber, have sometimes taken molasses, rum, coffee, and a quantity of sugar, not exceeding one-third of the vessel's inward cargo, (a limitation disadvantageous to this country) have more frequently received money for their cargoes, which they carried (as under similar circumstances they will continue to do), to the French, Dutch, and Danish settlements, the produce of which they could purchase at least 20 per cent. cheaper than that of Jamaica.

That

That America has already gained an extraordinary portion of our carrying trade, and that on an average of three years, 1795, 1796 and 1797, no less than 1289 American vessels have entered inwards, in the several ports of the British West-Indies alone.

That the navigation of these kingdoms is lessened to the amount of the tonnage and men thus employed.

That if we renew the experiment which we made by the Act (founded on the Dutch Property Act), which has just expired, and by which the Navigation Laws were suspended for two years after the war, the complaints of our merchants will be justly renewed, our shipping and men, to be discharged on the return of peace, will remain without employment; the ship-building trade will be utterly discouraged; and the multitude of artizans connected with that most essential manufacture, be dispersed abroad in search of occupation and bread, or remain at home, idle, famished, and riotous, as on former

mer occasions, the greatest nuisance, instead of the greatest advantage of their country.

To these details I might easily add more of great importance and weight ; but enough, I hope, has been already said, to satisfy the public, that the Navigation Laws cannot be suspended or violated without much private mischief and public danger. I shall, therefore, only farther observe, that the arguments I have advanced, have issued from no enmity to Americans or to America, or to the individuals of any nation. My writings and efforts, for the last twenty years, in favour of the great palladium of our marine, have, indeed, excited against me in America, some asperity and ill-will ; and these pages may possibly renew the enmities which have so often attempted to arraign my intentions, and disprove my observations. If, however, I had been inclined to inveigh against the Americans, various circumstances and facts are within my knowledge, which would have enabled me to indulge such a spirit. But far from being disposed to
 avail

avail myself of occurrences not immediately connected with my subject*, I have sought
and

* I have less ground than others for dissatisfaction respecting the American States, because I do not regret the independence, especially of the States North-East, West, and South-West of the Chesapeak, which produce little that we want; and among other reasons, because an Article, that would have proved highly mischievous to the Mother Country, had been introduced into our Colonial Law, viz. that Plantation built ships should be deemed British; by which means our Colonies became our most dangerous rivals in the manufacture which of all others we should have been most jealous. And it should be observed, that it began to interfere very much with the ship-building trade of this country; and that the numerous artificers employed in that trade, not only were more apt to emigrate to America than others, but all persons of that description, and the seamen employed, would have been out of our reach at the moment we should most want them.

I must add, that the attempt to introduce East-India built ships is perfectly unjustifiable, especially as our possessions in the East are not Plantations; and all the arguments

and am anxious only to maintain, in a manner however inadequate, the most valuable and indispensable code of my country ; and, satisfied with this motive, I shall feel as little inclined as I have hitherto been, to reply to the angry or fallacious answers of speculative and prejudiced opponents. Such former answers as I have read, I have read without conviction, and I did not think it incumbent on me to reply to arguments which, as I conceive, were intended only to embarrass or pervert the question. The same silence, as long as I possess for it the same grounds, I shall certainly preserve. It will be enough for me, if the publication of opinions, which a long experience, and a twenty years accumulation of proofs have only tended to confirm, should induce men to deliberate with caution on new treaties, which may subvert,

ments offered in favour of admitting them to the British Register, tend only to shew that we should import the teak timber and other articles for constructing ships from the East-Indies.

vert, or at all impair, the established laws : and I shall account my reward very high, if, by this or by former writings, I shall be thought to have contributed any thing to the progress of British trade, and yet more to the maintenance of the British Navy.

SHEFFIELD PLACE, *Feb.* 14, 1804.

THE END.

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